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March 2, 2005

Jordan J. Cohen, M.D.
President

The Honorable Michael Castle
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Diana DeGette
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Castle and DeGette:

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) thanks you for your leadership in introducing the "Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005" (H.R. 810). The AAMC, which represents the nation's 125 accredited medical schools, some 400 major teaching hospitals, and more than 105,000 faculty in 94 academic and scientific societies, endorses this legislation to expand Federal support for stem cell research while adhering to strict federal oversight and standards. In accordance with current law, the legislation ensures that no Federal funding shall be used to derive stem cells or destroy embryos.

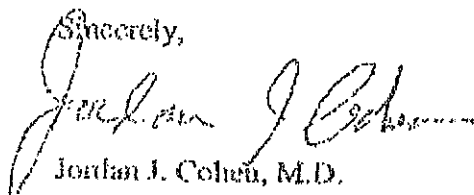
The discovery of human pluripotent stem cells is a significant research advance and Federal support to American researchers is essential both to translate this discovery into novel therapies for a range of serious and intractable diseases, and to ensure that this research is conducted under a rigorous and credible ethical regime. The therapeutic potential of pluripotent stem cells is remarkable and could well prove to be one of the important paradigm-shifting advances in the history of medical science. These cells have the unique potential to differentiate into any human cell type and offer real hope of life-affirming treatments for diabetes, damaged heart tissue, arthritis, Parkinson's, ALS and spinal cord injuries, to name but a few examples. There is also the possibility that these cells could be used to create more complex organ structures that could replace diseased vital organs, such as kidneys, livers, or even hearts.

We recognize the significant ethical issues that are raised about embryonic stem cell research and we respect the view of those who oppose such research, including some in our own medical school community. However, we are persuaded otherwise by what we believe is an equally compelling ethical consideration, namely, that it would be tragic to waste the unique potential afforded by embryonic stem cells, destined to be discarded in any case, to alleviate human suffering and enhance the quality of human life.



Your legislation recognizes the need to expand Federal support of research on pluripotent stem cells so that the tremendous scientific and medical benefits of their use may one day become available to the millions of patients who so desperately need them. Again, we thank you for your leadership on this issue, and we stand ready to work with you to achieve our mutual goal of helping to ensure the potential of this research is translated into treatments and cures.

Sincerely,



Jordan J. Cohen, M.D.